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Hispaniae Veteris Descriptio . . . 1586

Stock#: 81945
Map Maker: Ortelius
Date: 1590
Place: Antwerp
Color: Hand Colored
Condition: VG
Size: 19.5 x 14.5 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

Striking Ortelius Map of the Ancient Iberian Peninsula, with Inset of Cadiz. Separately Published Example.

Beautiful and detailed map of ancient Spain, Portugal and the Balearic Islands from Ortelius' *Parergon*. The *Parergon* was generally published as an appendix to Ortelius' magnum opus, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, which is considered the first modern atlas. It was also published separately, in 1595 and 1624.

Oriented northward, this map displays the Iberian Peninsula, from the southern border of France (*Galliae Confinia*) in the northeast to the northern tip of Morocco (*Africae pars*) in the south. The peninsula is comprised of the three Roman provinces of *Tarraconensis et Citerior*, *Lusitania*, and *Baetica*, territory that covers modern-day Spain, Portugal, and the Balearic Islands.

This map is characterized by excellent attention to detail. The shape of the coastline is very accurate, which is unsurprising given that Europe was well mapped by this time. Rivers are carefully rendered, and throughout the map mountain ranges and forests give the land texture. In particular, the Pyrenees Mountains (*Pyrenaei montes*) dividing Spain and France are well-drawn. Cities are represented with precise drawings of buildings, which is typical of Ortelius maps.

Three strapwork cartouches adorn this map. In the northwest corner, a relatively simple cartouche indicates the title and cartographer. A more intricate cartouche in the southwest corner dedicates the map to the knowledgeable Spanish theologian Benedictus Arias Montanus, a personal friend of Ortelius. This one is more ornate than the last, containing figures in addition to the beautiful strapwork.



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The third, and largest, cartouche contains an inset map of the Cadiz region, the southern tip of the peninsula at the Strait of Gibraltar. This additional detail shows more towns and a more precise coastline than the main map. The cartouche also contains an extensive list of places of unknown location, including peoples, cities, mountains, rivers, and more. All of the cartouches employ texture and shading which give them a three-dimensional appearance.

Each aspect of the map is labeled, and some labels give additional information about the name or events that occurred there. For example, the Strait of Gibraltar (*Fretum Herculeum, Gaditanum, et Columnarum*) is given a description that indicates it is the connection between the Mediterranean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Names of a variety of mythical and historical figures can also be found on the map, such as classical gods like Mercury and Diana, heroes like Hercules, and scholars like Pliny. This indicates the map's use as a reference for the region in both geography and history.

Parergon

Although best known for his world atlas, the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum*, the *Parergon* was a project of personal interest and the work that Ortelius himself considered his greatest achievement. He had a deep interest in classical antiquity which spurred him to create the *Parergon* maps, and the amount of time and detail he put into each map is clearly evident. Ortelius hand-drew each map of the *Parergon*, which required considerable skill and knowledge of the area's history and geography. It is considered the first historical atlas.

Parergon means supplementary and, accordingly, the first three *Parergon* maps were published as supplements to the 1579 edition of the *Theatrum*, which had already been in print for nine years. Over time, successive editions of the *Theatrum* were supplemented with more *Parergon* maps, and there are 55 known plates overall. The *Parergon* was also published as its own atlas separate from the *Theatrum* on two occasions, once in 1595 and again in 1624.

The *Parergon* was highly successful both as a supplement to the *Theatrum* and on its own. It was variously translated into French, German, Italian, and English and regularly printed until 1612. Further editions were more sporadic but still popular, such as the 1624 edition which was published twenty-six years after Ortelius' death in 1598.

This striking map and indeed the entire *Parergon* blends geography, history, and myth, and the level of detail present speaks to Ortelius' skill as a mapmaker and his dedication to his craft. This would be a valuable addition to a collection of European maps, Ortelius maps, or maps of classical antiquity.



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Detailed Condition:

Some pen marks underlining text at bottom right. Thinning in the inset map of Cadiz to Gibraltar. Blank text on verso, indicating a post-1612 separate printing.